



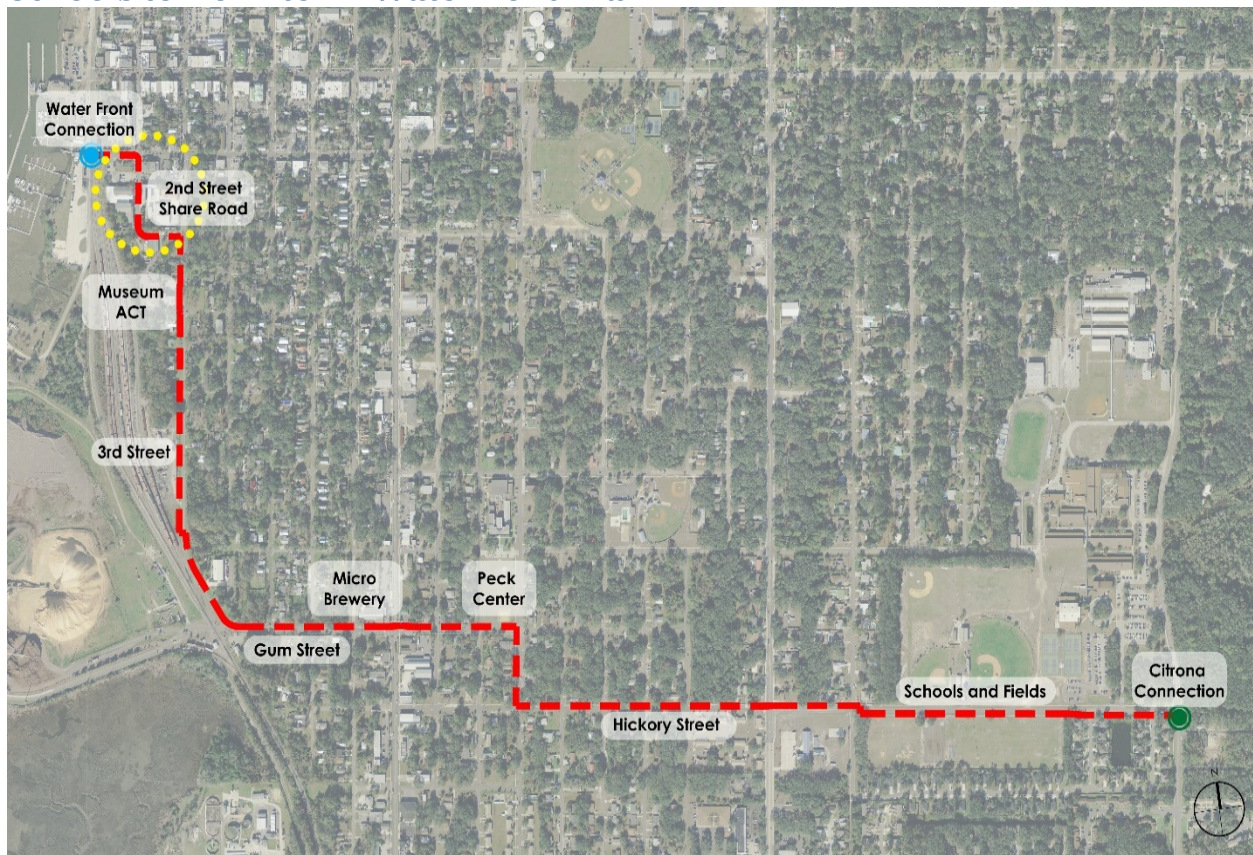
August 28, 2020

Mr. Taco Pope
Nassau County Assistant Manager
96135 Nassau Pl.
Suite 6
Yulee, FL 32097

Dear Mr. Pope,

Please consider the following information regarding the proposed “Schools to Downtown Waterfront” Trail. As you know, over the past year, Nassau County planners, including you and Robert Companion, have periodically met with City of Fernandina Beach staff and local bicyclist group representatives to discuss the possible future of a new shared-use nonmotorized trail that would connect the City’s schools on Citrona Street to the downtown waterfront.

Schools to Downtown Waterfront Trail



As shown above, the proposed “Schools to Downtown Waterfront” trail would connect the Fernandina Beach High School and Middle School along Hickory St., South 10th St. to the Peck Center and along Gum St. and 3rd St. to Ash St. and the downtown waterfront. In addition to a trail along this route, the City proposes a short extension to the proposed trail along Citrona Drive, which would extend the trail from Hickory St. along Citrona Drive to connect to an existing trail on Jasmine Street. This extension to Jasmine Street would create the very exciting outcome of a continuous island-wide bicycle trail on Amelia Island that transverses from the beaches on the East side of Amelia Island to Fernandina Beach’s historic downtown waterfront on the West.

Working toward this long-term goal, the City contracted with consultants Coyle and Caron to complete a preliminary trail design (see enclosed “Schools to Downtown Waterfront Trail” Planning Study). Over the past year, volunteers from the Friends of the Amelia Island trail did extensive community outreach culminating in a public meeting at the Peck Center in January 2020. A summary of the community outreach campaign is attached. At the public meeting, there was strong public support for the proposed trail, which was identified as an attractive trail which would help connect our community to its public resources and provide safe passage through the neighborhoods to downtown. On June 20, 2020, at their Regular City Commission meeting, the City Commission directed the City’s Grants Administrator to pursue grant funding for the proposed trail.

Additionally, in their draft FY 2020/2021 City Budget, the City has included funding for a Right-of-Way topographic survey to further explore geographic elements that will have to be planned for and to further refine the Schools to Downtown Waterfront Trail budget. In addition to helping the trail planning effort, both the referenced studies will be helpful components of future grant applications to fund the trail.

Preliminary cost estimates for the proposed trail exceed \$2.5 million dollars. These costs exceed the capacity for the City to provide. Trail grants available from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection could only cover a small portion of this cost. However, the Florida Department of Transportation Shared-Use Nonmotorized Trail (FDOT SUN Trail) program offers the potential to fully-fund the “Schools to Downtown Waterfront” trail. Should the City be successful in being awarded an FDOT SUN Trail grant, the Schools to Downtown Waterfront trail would be placed on FDOT’s Five-Year Adopted Work Plan. So, under this plan, construction on the “Schools to Downtown Waterfront” would commence in approximately six years, or FY 2026.

To qualify to apply for FDOT SUN Trail program, a project must first be selected as a regional priority by its Regional Transportation Planning Organization (TPO), in our case, the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization. As you know, TPO rules require that Counties, not Municipalities, bring forward projects for TPO inclusion.

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I seek your support and assistance with the County to pursue getting the “Schools to Downtown Waterfront” trail with the extension to Jasmine Street ranked as a regional priority with the North Transportation Planning Organization (TPO). I believe a joint City/County grant application with the preliminary design work, community outreach and right-of-way survey already completed by the City, would be a strong TPO and SUN Trail funding candidate. As a result of the substantial investment already made by the County in the Amelia Island Trail and the Amelia River to Sea Trail, our area is extremely well-positioned to broaden the trail network. Additionally, both the TPO and FDOT would look favorably on the fact that the proposed “Schools to Downtown Waterfront” trail will be another link in the East Coast Greenway connecting us to St. Mary’s, GA to the north and Duval County to the south.

I welcome your thoughts, whether by e-mail or telephone, regarding the viability of the County joining the City in championing the “Schools to Downtown Waterfront” trail with the TPO. Please call me at (904) 310-3101 or respond by e-mail at dmartin@fbfl.city at your convenience. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,



Dale L. Martin
City Manager

Cc: Lorelei Jacobs
Mike Spino

Attachments

Coyle and Caron “Schools to Downtown Waterfront” Planning Study
Community Meeting flyer
Community Outreach Summary